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*Views of Decorah*  
*and*  
*Happy Remembrances*  
*of*  
*...1913...*







Milwaukee Depot

MARY was languishing with the heat, want of sleep, and disappointment. I could not afford to send her away to a rest cure, even if she had been willing to go.

We were city born and bred, and our homes had always been in Chicago, and when I would urge her to go to some of our lovely parks, she only answered:

"What's the use. I should only be more lonely, and the smell of the city is only just over the fence."

She was right too, for tho the parks are lovely and the air much cooler and fresher than on the streets you do not get away from the smell or the echo of the city, so I could not but agree with her.

I have often stood at the edge of the lake in Jackson Park, and fancied I was on the sea shore till I'd look around and see Field's



Winnesheik Hotel

Museum, then, my fancy would flee, for I could not feel I was very far from the city in spite of the stretch of water at my feet.

Night after night when I would return from business, her tired white face would urge me to do something for her, but what I did not know. She looked so sad, tired, and lonesome, and no wonder. Just two weeks before I had fetched her back from a short sojourn in the Maternity Hospital with empty arms; the tiny soul sent to us had just fluttered its wings on this earth and then flown back to its Maker, but not before it had left a mark on our hearts, which will never be effaced.

All the months of waiting, sleepless nights and pain had resulted in nothing but a sense of loneliness.

Particularly that morning had I sensed her despondency as I wished her goodby, telling her I would try to get off in time to take a jaunt out to the Lake Front, for the heat was intense.



"business street lighted by electroliers"

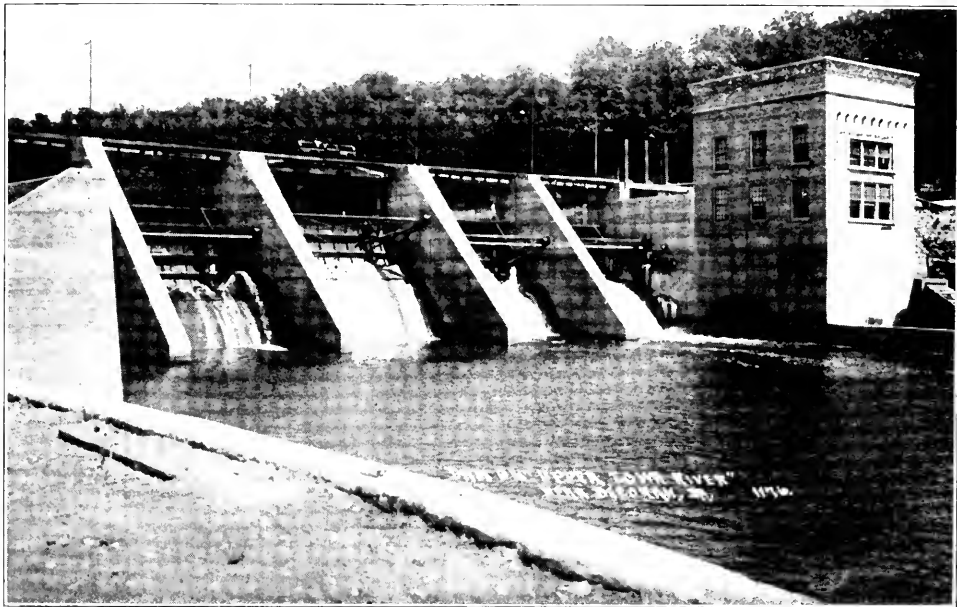
I little knew events were so shaping themselves that I could experience the pleasure of seeing my wife restored to health with little expense.

Miles, our Iowa man, had been stricken with heat in his home the other side of Chicago, his western route still uncanvassed. No one seemed anxious to finish his territory for most of the towns left were beyond the railroad, that is to say after reaching a certain town, the limit of that particular railway branch, one had to make the surrounding towns by team or auto, that being the only way they could be reached.

I idly remembered him speak of one such town named Decorah at the end of a Milwaukee Branch, which town he said had more points of interest to the mile than many another to ten, also that he intended to spend a week's vacation there some time.

Quick as a flash the thought came to try to get the job of finish-





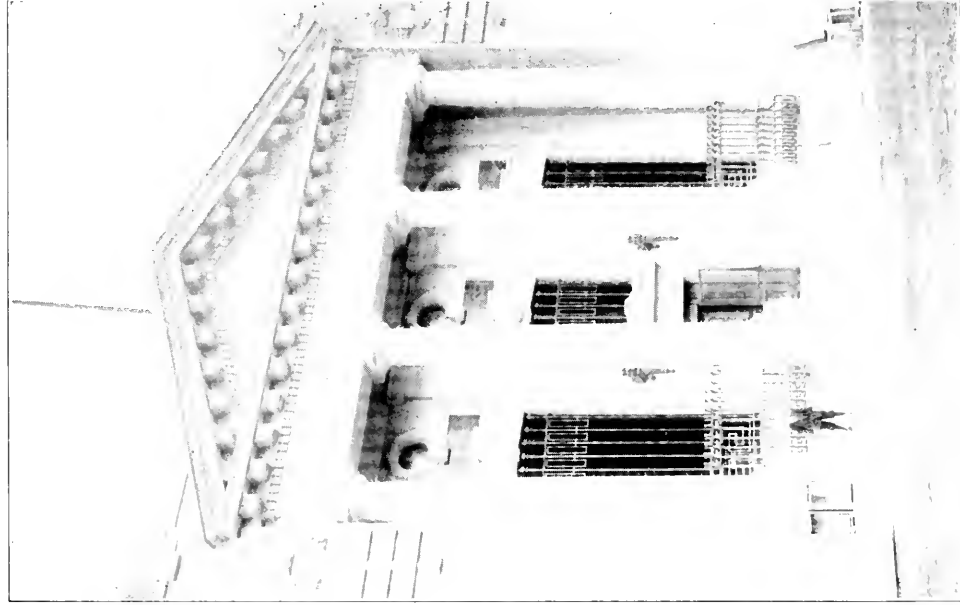
"damming the waters of the Oneota River"

ing Miles' western route, and if I got it, to take Mary to Decorah, leaving her there while I made the surrounding towns, figuring that if the roads were good I could get back every evening. So that noon I hustled home with the plan.

I explained the deal to her, asking her if she cared to go to the backwoods with me if I could get a chance at Miles' job.

I had figured it would cost only a little more than a five spot to get her there, so if the trip did not do her any good I should not be out much.

On her answering that she did not care, I hurried back again, and when the boss came in, I bearded the lion in the den, with the query: "Could I have a chance at Miles' job?" Receiving a growling reply that "if I thought I could get the business," I answered "that I thought



"massive front of the Winneshiek Co. Bank"

I could," and was given the lists and samples with directions to start right away, for "Miles was due."

I felt unduly elated as I walked home, and it seemed to affect Mary to a certain degree, for she showed quite a little interest as she packed the two suitcases, and put the few things of value we owned away; but by the time she had given away the remains of food which would spoil in our absence, she was almost ready to change her mind and stay home.

But I got her started. We certainly were not very comfortable in the day coach, but the sleeper would not have been any more comfortable, for it was so hot.

I had taken tickets direct to Decorah, meaning to take in the other towns on my way back. We arrived at Calmar some time in the night, there we took a bed and rested till time to catch the second train to Decorah, so we were rested some; still it was not till we were nearly



"around Citizens Bank"

there that Mary began to comment on the country we were passing through.

It was worthy of comment too, field after field of grain in shocks or falling under the reapers knife. Field after field of green rustling corn we passed, even the grass here was greener than that near Chicago. The stock in the pastures, in spite of the heat, looked slick and in good shape.

Then through woods we went, with shade so thick that the sun barely flickered through the leaves, and anon with a roar we would pass over a little bridge which spanned one of the many streams which found their way to the crooked picturesque Oneota river, which we found later encircled more or less this little inland town of Decorah, as it nestled in a green valley like a babe on its mother's lap, seemingly protected by the wooded hills which surrounded the town. Almost all



Court House

kinds of trees grew on these hills. Here you could see a maple with leaves aquiver, there a sturdy oak would spread its branches afar, peeping thro' could be seen the white bark of the birch, and anon a stately pine would tower far above the lower trees as if trying to pierce the blue of the sky.

As we stood on the platform of the Milwaukee Depot, I noticed Mary looking around. Then with a gasp she said:

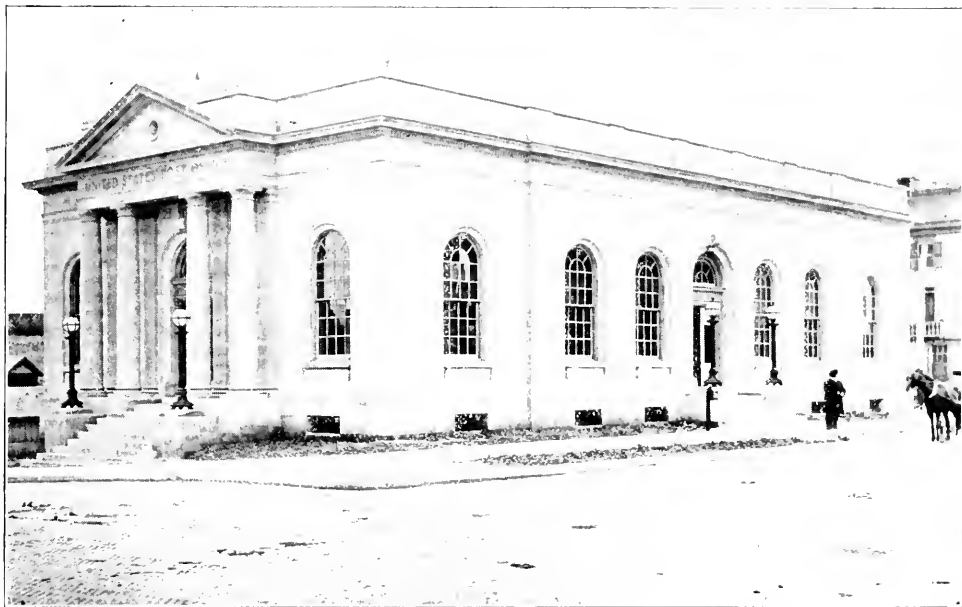
"How restful it is here, John. We must be a thousand miles from a city."

"Oh my no, we cannot be more than a fourth of that from Chicago."

"How lovely the hills are around here."

Here the driver of a hack put his hand on our suitcases with some remark as to the merits of the "Winnesheik Hotel," and impelled by his pressure we entered the hack which in less than enough time for us



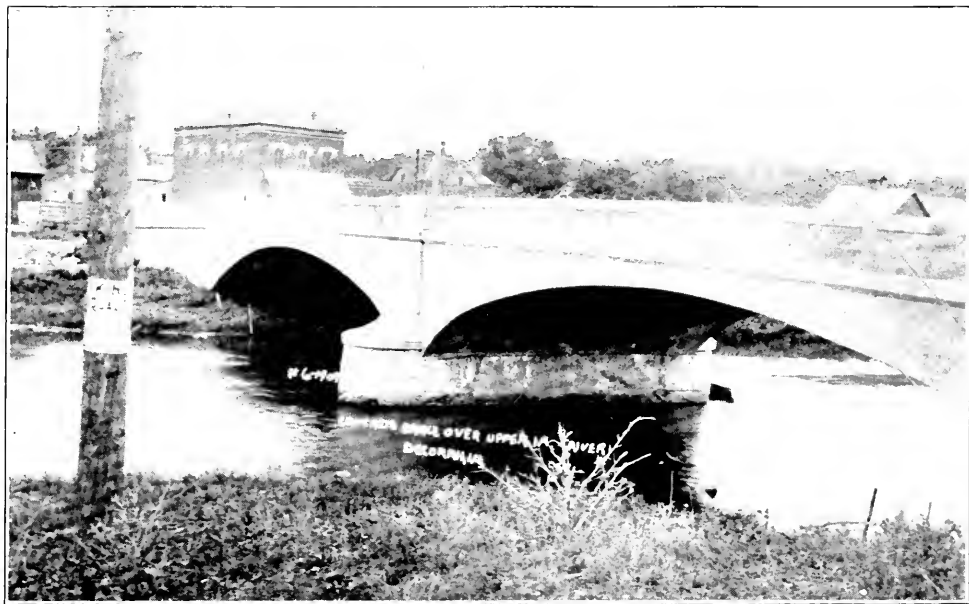


Government Post Office

to get seated stopped at the door of quite a grand looking hotel which we found as imposing inside as out. But Oh! such good homey things we got to eat. Our room looked over the open square roof porch, so the wind found its way to our heated bodies as we lay and rested till evening.

After supper we went onto the street, and a prettier sight has never dawned on my eyes, may be, because I did not expect to see a small town lighted as this one was, or else the lack of noise and the clear air, enhanced the beauty of this long main business street lighted by electroliers, the power for which is supplied by damming up the waters of the Oneota (or as it is sometimes called "The Upper Iowa River") a short distance from Decorah.

Up and down we wandered, taking in the music of the "movies" of which there were three, admiring the massive front of the "Winne-

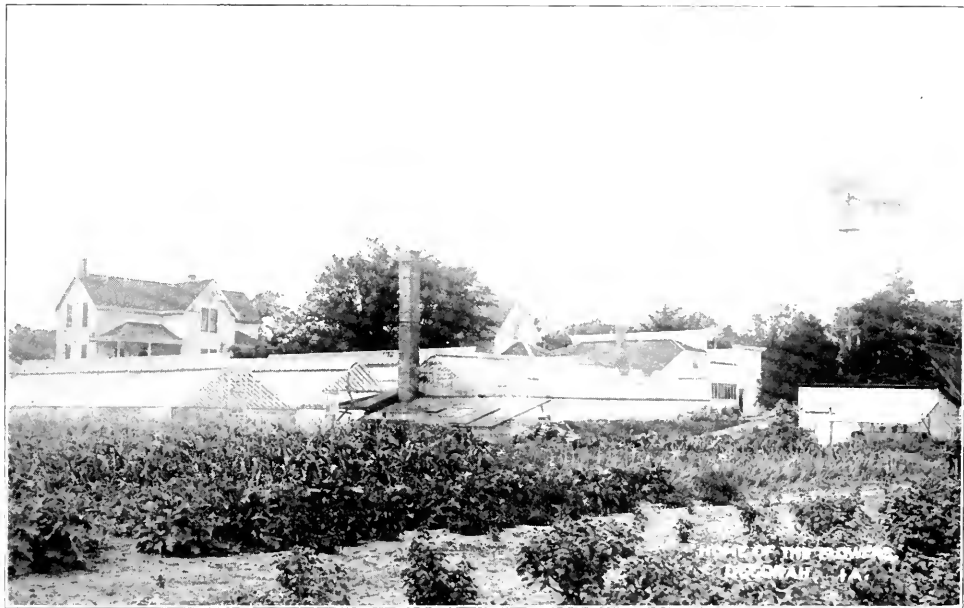


The Cement Bridge

sheik Co. Bank", listening to the sweet chiming clock hung from the Portal of the "National Bank", then around the "Citizens Bank", to get a better view of the "Court House" and "Government Post Office."

Everywhere plenty without ostentation seemed to spread its hands, lovers arm in arm walked slowly along the street, every one seemed to have time to live, different to the crowds on the streets of Chicago.

After an hour or so of this we re-entered the hotel. Going to our room we turned out the lights and stripped to cooler clothing, then seated by the open window with Mary's head on my shoulder we looked across the porch to the sky studded with stars content to be still, till Mary yawned sleepily, and I hoped that this night for once again she might sleep soundly and wake refreshed, something she had not done for months.

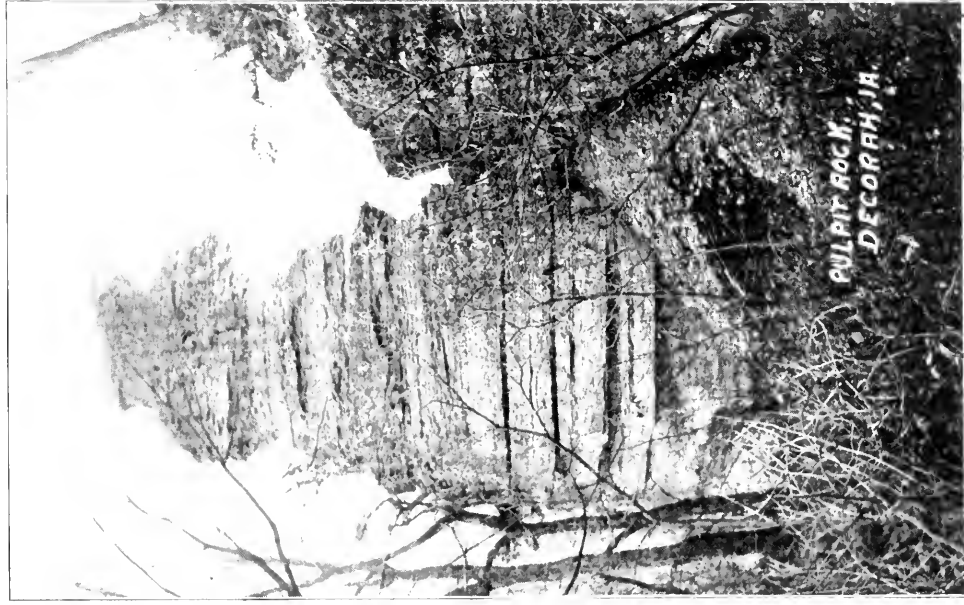


"Home of the Flowers"

Awaking next morning about five, I found her sound asleep, then closing the windows and pulling down the blinds, I quietly dressed and descended to the lobby, requesting the clerk to give orders not to have my wife disturbed till she rang. He answered: "Here's Tilly. Tell her yourself."

Turning, I saw a pleasant faced girl in whose hand I placed a trifle repeating my request, then I passed the time till breakfast was ready making inquiries as to the location of the different merchants whose names were on my list for Decorah.

After a breakfast of ham and eggs I started out to get the business I had thought I could get—and I got it. I do not know whether it was on account of my intense admiration of the town and surroundings, or whether the merchants were really in need of all the things they



PULPIT ROCK,  
DECORAH, IA.

"Shaped like a pulpit"

ordered then, anyway, by ten o'clock I had doubled Miles' sales with all the merchants I had tackled.

Thinking I had done a fair day's work, I returned to the hotel and up to our room, to find Mary just awakening. Sitting up at my entrance she yawned and asked:

"Breakfast time?"

"Lazy girl," I retorted, "it is nearly noon."

"Really."

"Yes, really. How do you feel?"

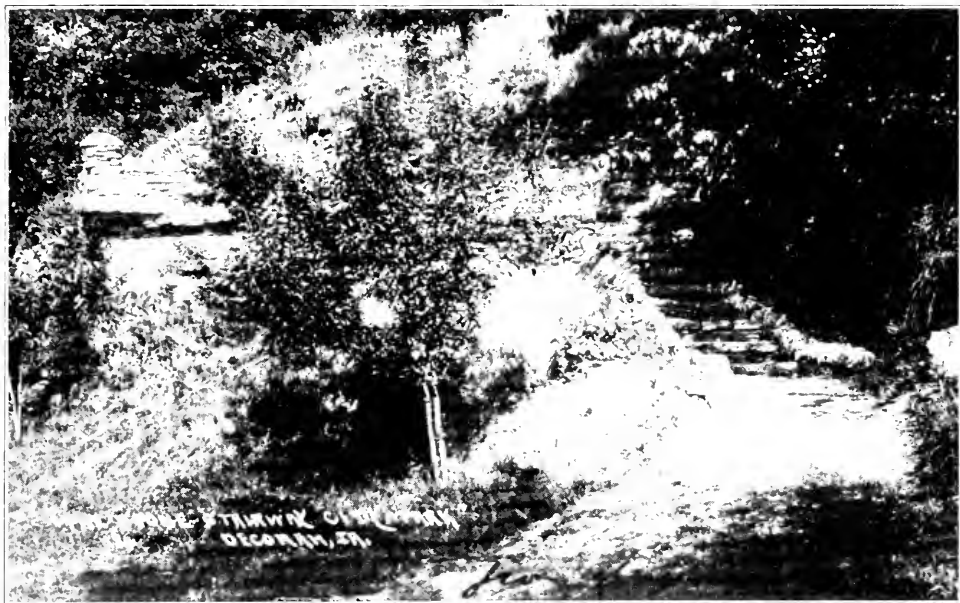
"Fine. How quiet it is here!"

"Are the natives all dead?"

"Not on your tintype. They are all up and doing."

"I have sold enough goods already to last me the rest of this week





"unique stairway cut right in the stone of the hill"

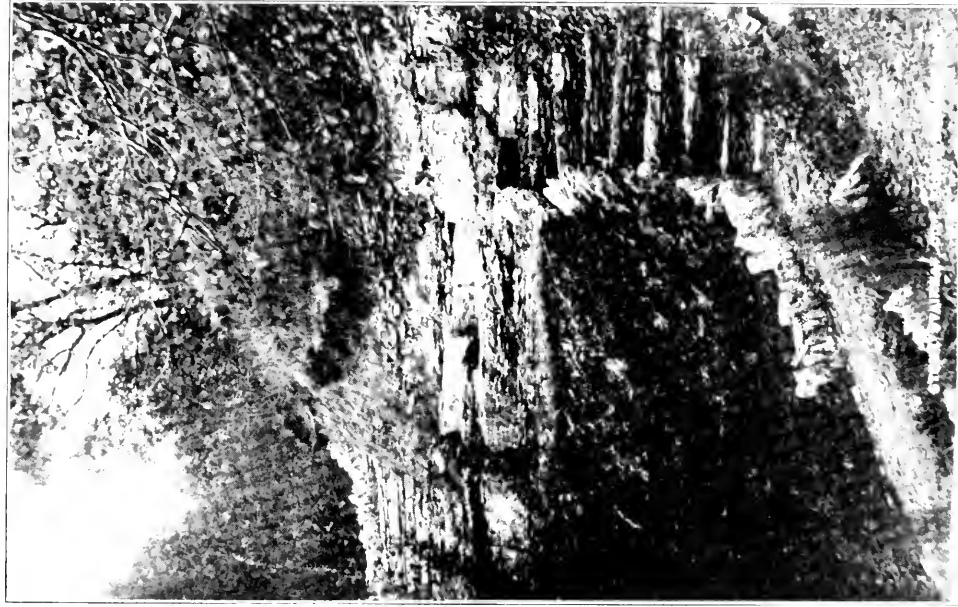
in commissions, and I could not have done that unless they were very much alive.”

“Hurry up old girl, while I go and see about a breakfast for you. I want to show you around some of these places the boys were telling me of, guess we have struck a bonanza. A regular Free Show.”

Down in the lobby I was met with smiling countenances when I explained that my wife was just recovering from an illness. And could I bother some one to take up a cup of coffee and an egg?

“Sure thing.” Then I entered into conversation with the clerk about train service, for the idea came to me to send in this sample of my ability to get the business, and astonish the boss, and at the same time ask for a couple of days for sight seeing.

By the time Mary was dressed and had breakfasted, I had my orders made out, and obligingly the clerk told me:



"down that stairway with eyes aglow"

"You can get them into Chicago to-night if you can catch that noon train at Calmar."

"How?"

"Get an Auto."

"Oh, can I?"

"I should say you could, as good a one as you can get anywhere."

"Alright then, that is what I'll do. Will you go, Mary."

"Yes, I should like to."

The clerk phoned, and in less than ten minutes there came an auto as clean and slick as if just from the factory.

Mary and I entered, and enjoyed the ride immensely. Up and down hills, thro' shady lanes, and by verdant fields. On both sides of the road the farm houses were pretty and substantial; many of them one could see had all the modern improvements. Through many an



"Such Views"

open shed door, the auto could be seen; showing the farmer around here was no backwoods man in regard to rigs. We arrived in plenty of time to send the letter, and while Mary rested in the hotel I did a little more business; then we dined and wended our way back.

Towards evening I hired a rig, and drove the length of "Water Street", thence across the "Cement Bridge", along "Maple Avenue", stopping at the "Home of the Flowers" where we purchased a huge bouquet of flowers for Mary's folks, and once again we crossed the Oneota river, which here is dammed to turn the "Tavener Mill." In three places less than three miles apart, this enterprising little stream is put to work for the good of man.

On the "Tavener Bridge" we stopped the horse to take in the long vista up and down stream, the water forming a small cataract as it falls



CITY PARK VANDERBILT

To the Park

over the dam, composed mostly of limbs and brush, then we ambled on, following the road regardless of where we were going.

Suddenly we were arrested by the sight of a natural curiosity in the shape of an immense high rock isolated from the others, and shaped like a Pulpit.

"Look," said Mary, just as I hollered "Whoa!"

"Isn't that grand?"

"That is where the "God of the River" stands to give his orders to the "Sons of Man"," said Mary. She was always visionary, but it did not need much stretching of the imagination to visualize that.

After taking our fill we went around what looked to us an impassable road, but a passing stranger assured us we could get back to Decorah that way, and as the horse was more than gentle we thought we would try it. We found ourselves more than repaid, for we came finally





In the Park

to a made road, hugging close to great high rocks on one side and shrinking away from the edge of a steep decline on the other side, which ran down to that same ever present Oneota River.

With a frisky horse it would have been a nerve racking ride. As it was, I was glad to have the inside track, for I did not fancy a tumble down that wild rough descent.

A short distance from Decorah we came upon a unique stairway cut right in the stone of the hill. Nothing would do but Mary must find where it led, so out she got, telling me to wait. I was so enchanted with the interest she had shown all day after the legarthy of the past six months that I would have sat there a week if she had asked me to. I confess I had begun to wonder if she were alright when she came in sight down that stairway, her eyes aglow.

"Oh, John! Up there is a veritable gem of a place, and it's free.



"that great Elk head with branching antlers"

You never saw anything like it. Such views! And such pretty seats. I asked an old lady who it belonged to and she said:

“Why this is the City Park.”

“Oh, we must go up there.”

“Alright, we will; but not now. I am as hungry as a hawk, I could eat the side of a house.”

“I too, I have not been so hungry for a year.”

“Then back we go to the house of good treatment and plenty,” I answered, clicking to the horse.”

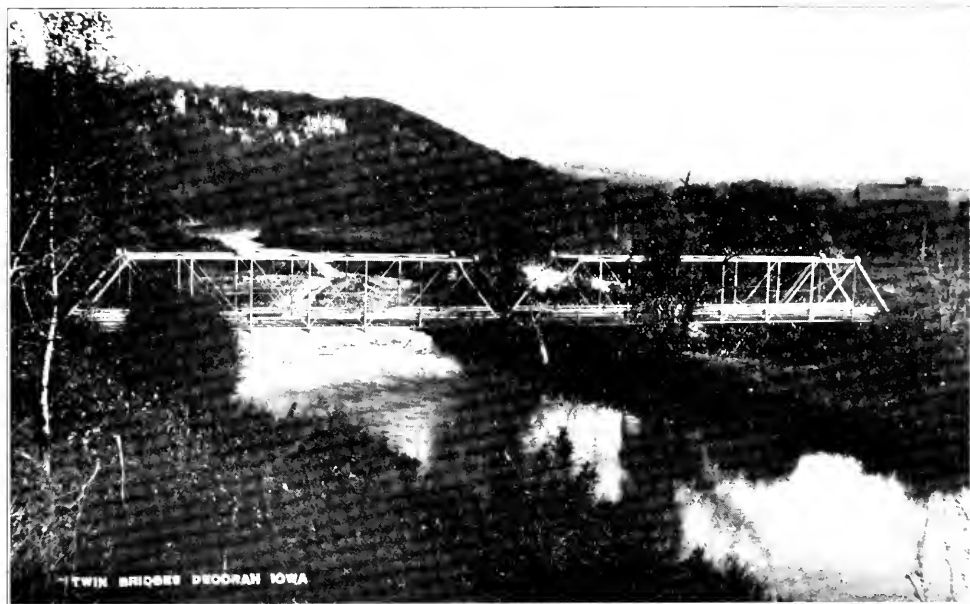
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“No peace for the wicked I guess. So, if you are determined to go up to that Park to-night I suppose I shall have to take you.”

“Of course you will, else I will get someone else. There are plenty



Twin Bridges

of nice young fellows in this town that would be pleased to take me there."

"Oh, oh! Is that so!" I answered smiling. "I believe we have struck the home of the "Elixir of Life", or was all that tired feeling put on "Mrs. Harrus" to play upon my feelings? Let me tell you, that you had me pretty well hipped young lady no longer ago than yesterday morning."

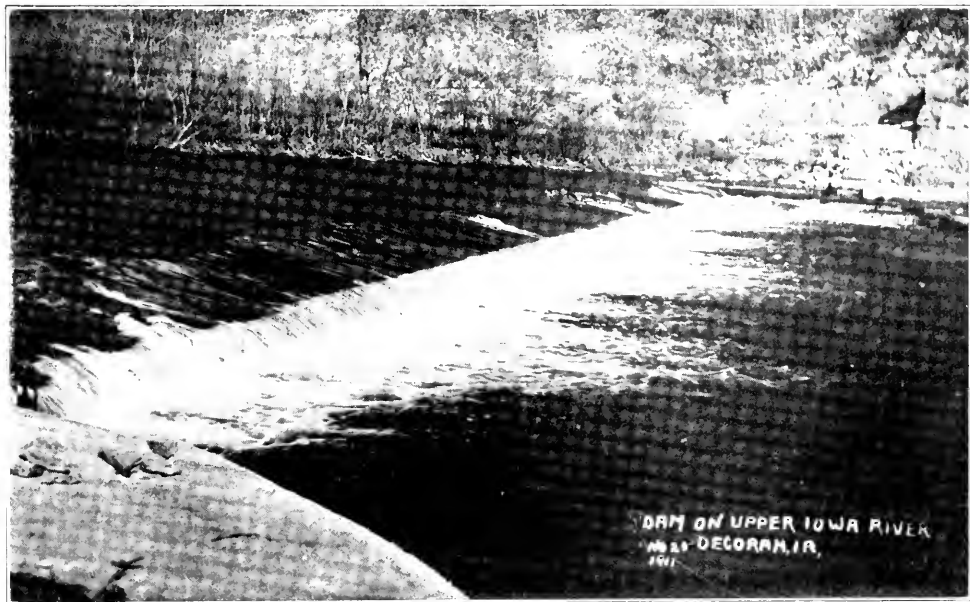
"I cannot help it, John; my blood just bounds in my veins here. I am all alive."

"Alright then, if you feel able."

"How far is it?"

"Have you inquired?"

"Yes. You go up to the "Court House," and one block farther, then straight up Broadway."



"this energetic Oneota River"

"Nice directions, I'm sure. But lead on, Mary mine, you for path finder."

We found it alright and never have we spent a more enjoyable evening; it was some of a climb at last, but it was worth it. Here Mary's visualizing came into play, till she had me pretty near spooky, for at one point of view, I was sure I could see that great Elk head with its branching antlers, which turned out to be an old blasted tree way below on level.

Neither heat, cold, storm, or fire could have kept us awake that night; we were too sleepy to say good-night. I think I was asleep before I reached the bed, for we were surfeited with Ozone.

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"Gee, that's some spiel from memory, but I guess I may as well finish up that trip. What do you say, Mary "





"cave, in which icicles hang in summer"

"Sure. It will be grand to read over these trips, when we get too old to make them any more; and be sure you put the pictures away with it when you get through, so we can look at those places when we read about them."

This was the answer I got from Mary, New Year's morning, after reading over the foregoing story of our trip to Decorah, the happiest time we spent in 1913.

It has been our custom to write our Remembrances at the close of each year since we have been married, as Mary says, to read over when we get old; and for all Mary's ill health, and the loss of our little one I still think this year will show up pretty well in those old days of ours when we resurrect this spiel.

So to take up the thread of my story again, I awoke the next morning feeling like a new man and able to coax the bark off a hickory tree.



The Ice Cave Road

Telling Mary to take things easy for the day, I started for some little town out-a-ways thinking thus to sidetrack her sightseeing, for I was afraid she might overdo it.

I did not succeed tho', I found, when I returned that evening. She had wandered down the other end of the town past the Rock Island Depot, where she informed me was a nice piece of railroad ground on which they gave free concerts, then she had found the "Twin Bridges" and the third mill which this energetic Oneota River supplies power for.

Full to the rim and bubbling over she was of the beauties of a road by a cave in which she was told icicles hung in summer and from whose yawning mouth steam issued in winter. She got me all fired up, so if the boss had not felt like giving me the time, I should have had to steal it, for I just had to see that cave.



Dunning's Spring

That evening we took in the "Movies" under the "Air Dome," and they showed pretty good pictures too, but we both could hardly keep awake. Sleep! I cannot see how it was we were so sleepy, I was ready to turn in by ten; and as for Mary, she could go to sleep now any time she laid down—outdoors or in, it made no difference. I found that out Sunday morning, the day we made our trip thro' the "Ice Cave Road," taking in as we went "Dunning's Spring"—another grand freak of nature.

From a huge hole in the solid rock the clear limpid water flows down and down till it mingles its forces with the river. At one time it came with force enough to turn a mill; it would not do so now, tho' its beauty is there just the same.

'Twas here Mary showed her excess tendency to sleep, and 'twas



"as it fell from one stone to another"

here my heart went up in thanks to him who made it possible for me to feel assured that my wife's brain would recover its poise.

We had sat down under the shade of the trees near the side of the flowing water. Not a sound could be heard but the murmur of the spring as it fell from one stone to another. I was thinking how much Mary had improved these few days, when I heard a snore; she was asleep, her head on my knees.

No one but those who have worried over a loved one whose brain and body had been slowly dying for want of sleep can tell how thankful I was for that symptom, and here I had paid out over five hundred dollars in the last six months to try to get that girl one natural night's sleep, when I could have gotten her here for a little more than a five spot,—and she sleeping like this already.





The front entrance to the College.

What is one man's meat is another's poison alright.

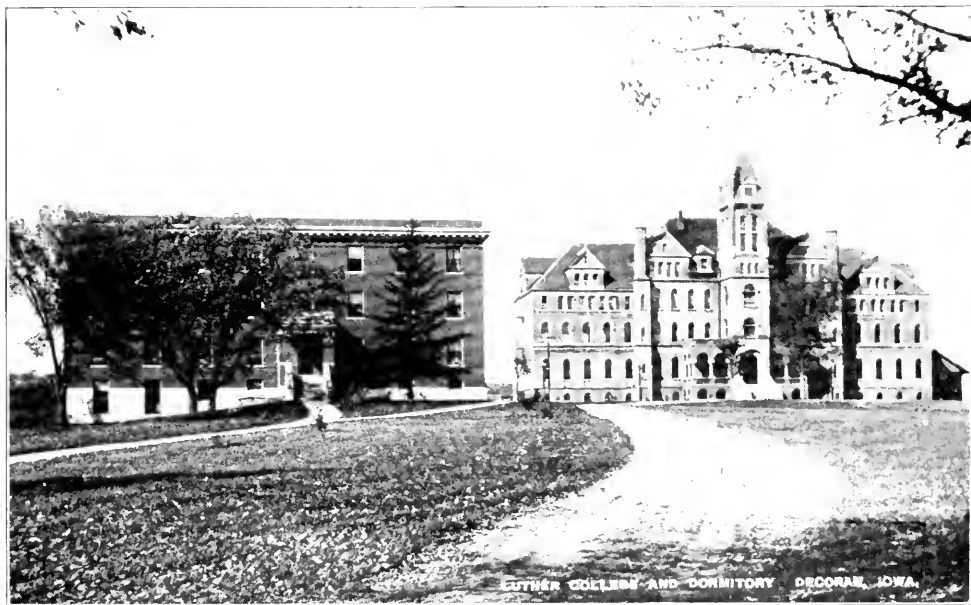
Poor old Miles. I wondered how he was.

If it had not been for his injury, I maybe might have lost Mary. That was what I was thinking when she opened her eyes just like a kid awakening.

Smiling up at me as I joked her about snoring she said :

"I am going to throw away that dope the doctor gave me. I have not taken a drop since I came here ; and, I declare, if I stop moving, I fall asleep."

That afternoon we drove up to the "Luther College," a large building, with gymnasium, museum, and large campus, and base ball grounds, where the boys have played some pretty strong games with visiting teams,



Large Campus

The front entrance to the college is up a slight hill, but at the back the earth drops away in sheer descent in some places. Here across the fields is seen the ever lovely Oneota River.

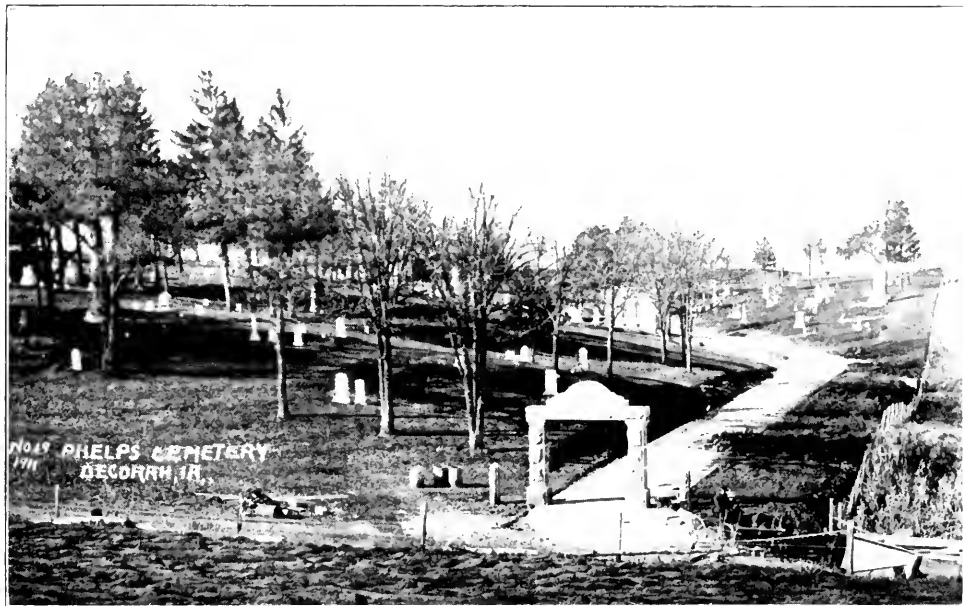
The early mail next day brought me a letter from the boss granting my request with the words: "Any day you can send in an order of that size, you are entitled to two days off. Hope your wife's health is better."

"Good old fellow! Say, Mary, let's go over to the green house and get some flowers to send to the boss's wife."

"Let's go to the woods and pick some wild ones," she answered.

We did, and by the letter we got they were a treat. I guess all the wild flowers die young in the city like the good children.

The day before we left Decorah we made a trip to "God's Acre,"



"God's acre! A truly lovely place"

a truly lovely place. Years ago a rich man by the name of Phelps had been as much entranced with the beauties of Decorah as Mary and I, for he had left a goodly sum of money to keep up the cemetery, and at his request his remains had been brought across the ocean so he could rest at last in that beautiful place of calm loveliness.

I wish our little one could have rested there too, but then, it does not make much difference where this outer cloak is laid.

In this place there was none of the dreariness of the usual burial places, instead it seems to keep before your eyes an everlasting impression that you only rest awhile, and who would not rest in that lovely spot.

That night, the first time since we came to Decorah, we were touched, but we were only too glad to donate our mite.



"for the erection of a hospital"

A retired farmer, who evidently knows a good thing, had offered to give a large sum of money for the erection of a hospital, if the citizens would raise the needed deficiency, and I was glad of a chance to help along a good thing.

If ever we are in need of a physician again in a hospital, there is where we shall go. It may be that there are better physicians than will be found there, but nowhere I know, would Mary and I feel as assured that we should regain our health as we could in that lovely little inland town of Decorah where we spent the happiest time in our lives last August, 1913.

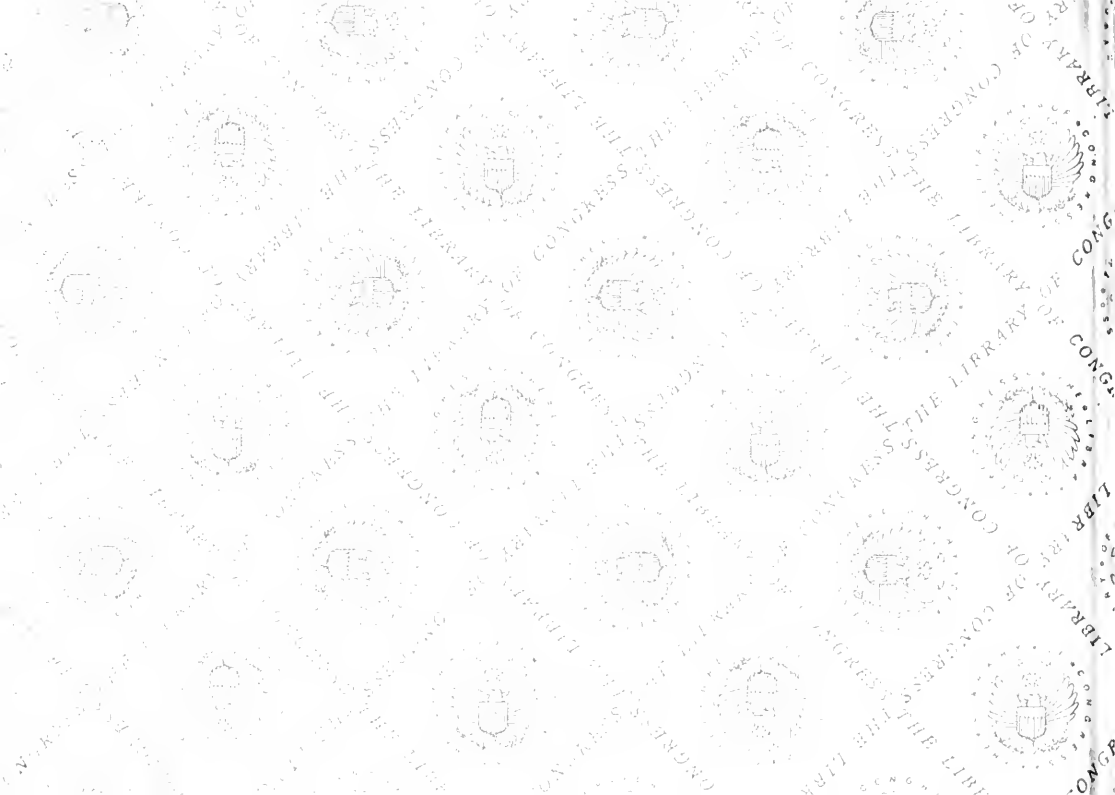
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